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ABSTRACT

Considering what it means to be a citizen, this book examines the effects of greater ethnic awareness on U.S. education. The book agrees that the upsurge in ethnic awareness has had some healthy consequences, but fears that concentrating too much on the differences among people poses the danger of fragmenting society. Instead of a transformative nation with an identity all its own, America increasingly sees itself as a preservative of diverse alien identities. The multi-ethnic dogma abandons historic purposes, replacing assimilation by fragmentation, integration by separation. In no arena is the rejection of an overriding national identity more crucial than in our system of education. The debate about curriculum is a debate about what it means to be an American. The volume questions whether the purpose of teaching history and literature is to raise the self-esteem of minority groups rather than to teach an accurate feel good about themselves rather than to teach an accurate understanding of the world and to protect the unifying ideals of tolerance, democracy, and human rights. (RJC)

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